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UNCLAS VIENNA 001966

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

DEPARTMENT FOR PM, SA/PAB, EUR/RPM, EUR/ERA AND EUR/AGS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: MARR PREL KPKO AF AU BK SR MK NATO EUN

SUBJECT: AFGHANISTAN: PARLIAMENT APPROVES DEPLOYMENT OF 100 SOLDIERS FOR ELECTIONS - CAVEATS LIFTED

REFS: A) VIENNA 1895 B) VIENNA 1152 C) STATE 60862  
D) VIENNA AU 081201Z APR 05

This message is sensitive but unclassified.

¶1. (SBU) On June 10, Parliament's standing committee (Hauptausschuss) unanimously approved the cabinet's decision (ref a) to send up to 100 Austrian soldiers to the ISAF mission in Afghanistan for a period of three months, until October 31, 2005. The Austrian soldiers will join the German PRT in Kunduz. At the same time, the committee extended the mandate of the staff officers already in Afghanistan to the end of December 2005 and lifted the caveat restricting their deployment to Kabul. Their mandate now covers the entire ISAF field of operations, including ISAF transit/logistics bases in Uzbekistan.

¶2. (SBU) Speaking to the standing committee June 10, Foreign Minister Plassnik stressed that free and fair elections were key to further positive developments in Afghanistan. According to Plassnik, the international community placed a high priority on stabilizing the country, and in particular, on containing the illicit drug traffic.

¶3. (SBU) The committee also approved Plassnik's request to support the EU's EUJUST LEX program to promote rule of law in Iraq. Austria will second up to five experts (three from the Justice Ministry and two from the Interior Ministry) for a period of 12 to 16 days starting in June 2005. Plassnik assured committee members that the training seminars would be held outside Iraq, possibly in Italy. Plassnik said the first free elections and the formation of a transitional government in Iraq have been two encouraging developments toward democratization.

¶4. (SBU) In response to the Ambassador's demarche to Defense Minister Platter (ref b), the GoA took advantage of the vehicle of the newest deployment authorization to lift the caveat on the previous ISAF deployment. MFA Deputy Political Director Thomas Hajnoczi told Acting DCM "it would have been silly for the troops to deploy to Kunduz - and the officers at ISAF not to have been able to go visit them."

BROWN